Anna Sheets

Reading Response 2

Routman’s books summarize the most effective ways to be an inspirational and successful reading and writing teacher within the elementary classrooms. I really enjoyed her points on how to teach writing effectively. Teachers should be confident enough to collect data on their students to help identify the different writing skills that need to be addressed in their classrooms. If schools curriculums are not meeting these needs, than the teacher should approach their administration and board of education to collaborate a way to gather the resources to converge the needs of students. Routman explains that there are too many “ writing kits”, which very expensive, however are not effective to teach good writing skills. These kits generally focus on students being able to “write” on standardized tests. Routman clarifies that these funds should be spent on teacher training. Teachers who are confident in their own writing abilities are more likely to teach writing effectively and feel confident in doing so in their classroom. She finally explains that a good practice for the writing process takes time. Students should be able to prewrite, write, edit, peer review, discuss, reedit and publish their work within the classroom. I believe that if this writing process was used correctly there would be no need for “writing kits” and students would succeed on testing because they are stronger writers, not just because they have been taught how to write to meet the demands of a test.

In continuation with the theme of allowing teachers time to use the best teaching practices for the highest student success rate, teachers should be using their time effectively to create lessons that the students will benefit from the most. In Routmans reading book, she explains an experience when she interacted with a teacher who had spent many hours creating different reading and writing centers for her classroom. At the end of this teachers explanation of her hard work, Routman enquired, “So what?”. I almost fell off the couch as I read. At first was outraged that this women had the gull to question the teacher about all of her hard work and dedication to her students to create an active and supportive learning environment. As I continued to read, I began to understand Routmans point of view. She explained that this teacher put so much work and time into centers, which she said the students showed no amazing benefit. Rather that students could have just have easily taken their papers to a different area with a clipboard and worked. The point that was being portrayed was that the teacher’s time is very valuable, and that no special props, or pillows are needed for students to work hard, and gain a better education. Rather, the teacher should be spending that transitional time to help with guided practice, and individual conferencing rather than using that time for center management and fragmented learning.

My main “take away” from Routmans books were that for students to be successful readers and writers they must view the process from a master, be given the time to practice the skills they have seen, and be given immediate feedback on their work. Teachers must be confident in their ability to demonstrate and model their thinking, process, and practice of reading and writing, and make personal connections with students to help them succeed at these difficult practices. Finally, that Routman believes that teachers should work smarter and not harder. To remember that teaching isn’t the only obligation that you have as an educator in your life, and that to be a good teacher you should be living your life to the fullest, to bring back share those wonderful stories with your students.

From our classroom discussions, I have gathered a multitude of information about the teaching styles and habits that I would like to create in my classroom, as well as strategies for when working with administration and parents. I really liked the idea of calling home for student’s good behavior. These calls generate deeper connections with parents to build a relationship of trust and learning for the benefit of the child. Another point that was brought up in class was the issue of changing grades for students. Grading in general was a long discussion for us, however I have very strong feelings about the idea of changing final grades for students. I previously had a wonderful professor who affected me deeply by explaining her teaching philosophy. She explained that as a teacher you should create a grading system that works best for you, and your student’s age level. That this system should be explicitly explained to parents, and that throughout the term you should keep your own written data as well as students work to provide evidence supporting the end of term grade. If an end of the term grading issue arises, you as the teacher have evidence and reason to support the grade that was earned by the student. That if parents continue to fight the grade that you as the teacher should be confident in your professional background, pedagogy and belief that the grade can not and will not be changed, and hopefully have an administration that supports this. This was a powerful conversation that was had, and carried into our classroom discussion of changing grades for students. As a future teacher I feel strongly that I will have the data, and the belief in my own professional skillset that I will not change end of term grades. I do believe however, that certain test and quiz grades can be altered on an as needed bases, however accumulative grades will not be. We will see as my teaching career progresses how my thoughts on grading and changing grades transforms as well.

I also feel that I greatly benefitted from viewing my classmates lessons. In the future I feel that it would be more beneficial for some presenters to be able to complete their full lesson for deeper understanding. I greatly enjoyed Sara’s presentation about using “hook’s” to catch a readers attention, and would have liked to seen her complete her lesson all the way through the writers workshop experience. Although, I have used writer’s workshop as a writer at the college level, at this time I am unsure how to structure the workshop for my students. I greatly believe that this workshop is beneficial to writers of all ages, including myself. I also really enjoyed Tom’s lesson with the use of the technology at the elementary level. As students rocket into the 21st century the use of technology is so important to give students’ the skills that they need to be successful in the future as well as make lessons interactive and fun! Joyce had a wonderful use material, with the idea of teaching outside of the box, with the use of real oranges to help students use and write with their five senses. From these lessons I felt that I gained a deeper understanding of different ways to present information, as well as practiced good teaching skills such as wait time, classroom management. Also, how to keep lessons short and to the point to allow students the most time to work on these knew skills.